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Letter dated 9 July 2002 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the presidential statement of 19 December 2001 (S/PRST/2001/39), by which the Security Council extended the mandate of the Expert Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for a period of six months. The Security Council also requested that the Panel submit an interim report after three months and a final report at the end of the mandate.

The Panel resumed its work in February 2002 under the chairmanship of Ambassador Mahmoud Kassem (Egypt), and presented its interim report in May 2002. Recently, Ambassador Kassem notified the Secretariat that the Panel would need additional time to complete its work, due to delays in receiving responses to the Panel's questionnaires sent to Member States and organizations concerned, as well as the need to fully corroborate some significant evidence, that the Panel had received lately.

Accordingly, I should like to recommend that the Panel's mandate be extended until 31 October 2002. Such an extension would also enable the Chairman to prepare for the presentation of the Panel's report to the Council and respond to any questions or comments Council Members may have, as well as to finalize the Panel's work shortly thereafter.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

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